

HB0605  
Medical Assistants  
IN SUPPORT OF THIS LEGISLATION

I am a Lutheran pastor in Miles City, Montana, former member of the Montana State Board of Nursing (public member - 8 years), and a frequent consumer/observer of Montana's healthcare delivery system.

The respected Institute of Medicine (IOM) estimated that in 2004, 190,000 people were killed in this country by preventable medical mistakes, (untold thousands more injured or killed in clinics and non-hospital settings). In our post-911 world, the necessity for knowing both the identity and competency of those providing healthcare is obvious. Errors are too easy and too costly.

When the original medical assistant legislation was proposed, reasonable measures to ensure safety were dismissed with, "trust us" assurances from proponents. When a Legislative Interim Committee asked the physician community to clarify certain areas of concern, the legislators' requests seem to have fallen upon deaf ears.

Now comes reasonable legislation to give the healthcare consumer confidence that when they are most vulnerable, those providing care will be educated and certified by a competent body, and supervised by a physician quickly available to the patient and provider in the event unforeseen circumstances should imperil patient health, safety, and welfare.

The proposed legislation seems reasonable and necessary given the ambiguity of existing legislation. The lack of timely response by the medical community and obvious economic interests must not trump safety interests of the healthcare consumer. HB0605 is reasonable and necessary. Failure to pass HB0605 will expose me and thousands of others to inadequate assurances of competency in medical service providers, precisely at a time when we are least able to advocate for ourselves.

I encourage you to pass this legislation as the voice of the people speaking in our common best interest.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Steven D. Rice  
Miles City, Montana